



July 1999

VOTING INFORMATION NEWS

Vol. 9 No. 7

A roundup of voting news from the Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP) ☒ For voters, potential voters and those who assist voters.

ETS Manuals

Do You Have Yours?

Throughout an election year cycle, the absentee voting process relies on the postal system to deliver election materials between citizens and their local election official. The farther a person is from home, with elections materials being sent through foreign country postal systems, the greater the chances for a delay in the delivery of the mail, possibly disenfranchising a citizen. In these situations, a citizen's vote may be saved by an alternative transmission method.

As discussed in the May issue of this Newsletter in the "Stateside" section, the advent of the Electronic Transmission Service (ETS) for election materials has become one of the most effective and efficient alternative methods for enfranchising citizens covered under the *Uniformed and Overseas Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA)*. One of the most common obstacles that *UOCAVA* citizens face when voting absentee is insufficient mail transit time between them and the local election official in their voting residence state.

With the introduction of the ETS, the absentee voting process has been revolutionized. The ETS allows election materials, including election information, voter registration, ballot requests and ballots (blank and voted), to be faxed between local election officials and the *UOCAVA* voters where faxing is accepted by state law. This method provides secure high-speed delivery of election materials between the voter and local election officials. With proper controls in place, the ETS can reduce the ballot transit time at least in half, helping to ensure that citizens are able to cast a ballot when they would not (See **Manuals**, pg. 3)

Attention All VAOs

Voting Continuity Folders

Due to rotation assignments in the Uniformed Services, new Voting Assistance Officers (VAO) are appointed frequently. These rotations are not only inherent to the Uniformed Services, but also in the Federal and civilian arenas at Embassies/Consulates and international organizations and corporations. Many times these new VAOs are unfamiliar with their duties and responsibilities. For this reason, the FVAP stresses the importance of your developing and/or maintaining a voting continuity file which can be given to your successor. The continuity file should provide basic details on absentee voting procedures, contain key election materials or anything that may help your successor perform successfully in this capacity. The continuity file should also provide the VAO with a quick orientation of his or her voting responsibilities and duties in helping to meet the organization's absentee voting needs.

The main duty of a VAO is to obtain and distribute voting related materials and to provide assistance to all of the citizens that they are appointed to help. The VAO helps ensure that these citizens understand how to vote absentee and what their voting rights are under the *Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA)*.

The following is a list of the resources and services that are available to VAOs to help them carry out a successful Voting Assistance Program. The voting materials should be available through normal supply distribution channels. If you are having trouble obtaining these materials, please contact your Service Voting Action Officer for further assistance (contact information listed on pg. 3).

LIST OF INFORMATION SUPPORT MATERIALS AND SERVICES

Voting Assistance Guide (VAG) - This is the primary source of information for a VAO (the 2000/01 VAG will be available this Fall). The VAG contains valuable, detailed information on how to carry out your duties as a VAO along with state by state (and territory) instructions and guidelines for voting absentee.

Federal Post Card Application (FPCA or SF-76) - The form is accepted by all states and

territories as a simultaneous request for registration and/or an absentee ballot. When completing the FPCA, you should ensure the citizens you assist follow the procedures for their voting residence state (procedure are contained in the VAG). These instructions should be followed closely as an incorrect FPCA could result in disenfranchisement.

Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot (FWAB, SF-186) - A back up ballot available to citizens outside the United States, including those at APO/FPO addresses, if they have not received the requested regular absentee ballot from their state after having applied for it early enough so that the request was received by the local election official at least 30 days before the election. This back-up ballot generally includes Federal offices and is valid only for the general election. The voter can write in the names of candidates or party preference for each Federal office on the ballot.

FVAP Website: www.fvap.gov - The site provides an overview of the FVAP as well as electronic access to many of the materials and publications provided by the FVAP. In

addition, it contains links to state government homepages and other sites with election information. A training workshop presentation, with valuable information on how

to assist potential voters can also be found on the site. There

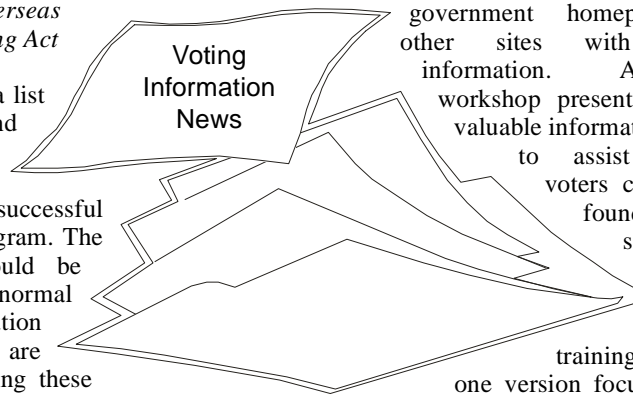
are two versions of the

training workshop,

one version focuses on the

duties and responsibilities of VAOs in the Uniformed Services, while another version is geared towards VAOs at U.S. Embassies/Consulates as well as overseas citizens organizations and corporations. The website is updated on a regular basis to provide the most current information and news for *UOCAVA* citizens.

Voting Action Plan - This is an action plan that provides guidance and implementation of the FVAP's worldwide voter assistance program and focuses on the role and duties of a VAO, such as conducting voting assistance workshops. Two Voting Action Plans are developed. (See **Folders**, pg. 3)



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Stateside

Legislative Update - The Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP) works with the legislatures of the states and territories to further facilitate the electoral process and help citizens covered by the *Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA)* to exercise their right to vote. The following is current information that may effect UOCAVA citizens.

Alaska: The State of Alaska will be conducting a special statewide election on September 14, 1999. The election concerns an advisory vote question on a long-term financial plan for the state and proposed use of income from the Alaska Permanent Fund. Information about the issue has been posted on the state homepage; the address is www.gov.state.ak.us/litgov/elections. You may locate this information by scrolling to the Statewide Special Election Information heading.

If you are a registered voter, your mail-in application for a ballot must be received by the 7th of July.

If you are not registered or need to update any registration information, the 30-day registration cutoff date is August 15. Your mail-in ballot must be postmarked on or before election day. Ballots mailed from outside the U.S. or from an APO or FPO address must be received not later than 15 days after the election. Ballots mailed from other addresses must be received not later than 10 days after the election.

If you are unable to meet the above mail-in dates, you may apply for an absentee ballot and submit your vote by fax. Applications by fax may be submitted beginning August 30 and continuing through 5 p.m. September 13. Voted ballots may be returned by fax from August 30 through 8 p.m. Alaska time on September 14. Fax-voting should be used only if you miss the by-mail application deadline.

Follow links from the FVAP Website at www.fvap.gov for additional information regarding timely legislative news in your state which may affect your absentee voting process! ✓

Please Note: If you experience difficulty when attempting to e-mail the FVAP or visit the FVAP Website, please use these temporary addresses or contact us by telephone or fax. We apologize for any inconvenience that this may cause.

E-mail: vote@fvap.ncr.gov

Website: www.fvap.ncr.gov

Voting Assistance Officers

"To Do" This Month

[] Be sure to establish and maintain a continuity folder that can be passed on to your successor upon your departure. This will help to ensure your successor receives a quick orientation of his or her voting responsibilities and will be most helpful in meeting your organizations absentee voting needs for the upcoming 2000 Elections. (See Article on pg. 1)

[] Call the FVAP to request a Training Workshop in your area or a video teleconference (where available). The schedule is being planned with training to begin this Fall.

[] Do an inventory of election materials to ensure that you have sufficient quantities of absentee voting materials on-hand to allow for participation in '99 elections.

[] Be sure to stay informed of possible special elections or run-off elections that may occur. Visit the FVAP's Web site at www.fvap.gov often for up-to-date information and materials. In addition, on-line versions of this newsletter and news releases are posted on the site. Citizens may now subscribe on-line to this newsletter and the FVAP news releases. We also encourage you to make this newsletter available to all citizens you assist. If you receive this newsletter by e-mail, we recommend that you forward it to all of the people in your command. If you currently receive this newsletter or the news releases by mail and would prefer to receive them via e-mail, (see pg. 4) please contact Mr. Matt Knefel (contact information listed below) or e-mail the FVAP at vote@fvap.gov. Not only will e-mail save paper, but it will save time in disseminating important voting information. Check with communications and distribution centers or the voting officer at the next higher organizational level to insure you are receiving voting information in a timely manner.

[] Follow through with distribution of the Communicat-ing with Your Elected Officials - 106th Congress and State Governors 1999-2000 pamphlet. An on-line version of the pamphlet is available at the FVAP website www.fvap.gov. Updates to the on-line version will be made on a regular basis. Encourage others to visit the site to stay in touch with their elected representatives at home.

[] Review the on-line Training Workshop presentation for VAOs at the FVAP Website. The information provided on-line supersedes the information previously provided on video tape and via FVAP training workshops. ✓

Federal Voting Assistance Program

Voting Information News provides information for citizens and Voting Assistance Officers and is published monthly by the FVAP.

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Internet Access:

E-mail: vote@fvap.gov
<http://www.fvap.gov>



Write To: Federal Voting Assistance Program
Department of Defense
Washington Headquarters Services
1155 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301-1155



Phone: (703) 588-1584
DSN 425-1584
Voting Information Center: (703) 588-1343
DSN 425-1343
TOLL FREE 1-800-438-VOTE (8683)



Fax: (703) 588-0108
DSN 425-0108

Note: Copying or using VIN articles in other publications, etc. is encouraged.

(**Manuals**, from page 1) otherwise have been able to vote due to time and location constraints. To communicate the proper procedures for electronically transmitting election materials and maintain the integrity of the process, the Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP) provides manuals for both the Voting Assistance Officer and the local election official regarding the process. The manuals are written in a user friendly format and contain a brief explanation of the general guidelines for using the service to include "What", "When" and "How" Sections. A transmission sheet with instructions is included along with "Frequently Asked Questions" to further educate the reader.

To date 44 states and territories allow for some type of electronic transmission in the absentee voting process for UOCAVA citizens. This alternative method provides a service to help ensure that these citizens are not disenfranchised by allowing them to use an alternative to the mailing system. We encourage use of this alternative to include electronic transmission of the Federal Post Card Application (FPCA) request for registration and/or absentee ballot, electronically sending the ballot to the voter and accepting the voted ballot from the voter where circumstances would otherwise disenfranchise the citizen. The provisions and guidelines for transmitting election materials electronically (faxing) are identified in each state and territory section of the Voting Assistance Guide (the Guide is now available on-line at the FVAP website www.fvap.gov).

The ETS Manuals are available through your normal distribution channels. If you are having trouble with your supply channels, your Service Voting Action Officer (contact information listed below) can assist you in obtaining these materials or if local assistance is not available please contact the FVAP directly (contact information listed on pg. 2) for more information.

Remember: When faxing election materials, we recommend use of the FVAP ETS at DSN (military) 223-5527, (703) 693-5527 or toll-free 1-800-368-8683. ☐

(**Folders**, from page 1) One plan is distributed by the Secretary of Defense to all DoD Components and other Executive Branch Agencies with citizens covered under the UOCAVA. The FVAP has also developed a plan that specifically addresses the needs of U.S. citizens residing outside the United States, not affiliated with the Federal Government.

DoD Voting Information Center (VIC) - An automated telephone system which contains election information and allows direct access to incumbent members of Congress, State Governors, State Chief Election Officials, and Service or State Department Voting Action Officers. Prior to an election, messages from candidates for Federal offices and State Governors are also available.

Electronic Transmission Service - This Service allows election materials, including registration and ballot applications and ballots, to be faxed between the local election official and the absentee voter, where faxing procedures are accepted by state law. Check the VAG for state specific information and guidelines. Electronic Transmission Manuals for both Voting Assistance Officers and Local Election Officials are available and provide assistance in using this service.

Voting Information News (VIN) - A monthly publication generated by the FVAP which contains information on elections and other voting-related matters that may affect UOCAVA citizens.

Voting News Releases - An announcement with time-sensitive information impacting UOCAVA citizens. These announcements are released on an as-needed basis.

Communicating with Your Elected Officials 106th Congress and State Governors 1999-2000 pamphlet - A pamphlet which lists incumbents in the current Congress as well as State Governors in all 55 states and territories. The pamphlet includes their names, addresses, phone numbers, fax numbers and e-mail

addresses (when available) as well as other general information to facilitate correspondence with them.

How To Do It! Vote Absentee brochure - A brochure which answers many of the most frequently asked questions about the absentee voting process.

Election Calendar - The year 2000 Election Calendar lists the primary election dates in all the states, territories, and the District of Columbia; primary runoff dates; states which have U.S. Senate and Governor races; and the number of U.S. Representative seats up for re-election (the poster will be available this Fall).

Motivational Posters - Inspirational voting posters available for VAO. Distribution is made through normal supply channels.

Ombudsman Service - If local assistance is not available the FVAP can help to resolve voting related issues or answer questions concerning procedures for registration and ballot requests, including timely receipt of ballots.

Each year VAOs should provide at least one briefing, training, or information period devoted to registration and voting procedures. These or other sessions should be made available to spouses and eligible family members, and ensure that incoming personnel are provided voting guidance if they arrive after the voting information briefing is conducted. Citizens should also know how to get in touch with you in case further assistance is required.

The FVAP hopes that this has provided an insight into the voting assistance officer program and available resources for carrying out your program (Be sure to put a copy of this newsletter in your voting continuity file for future VAOs). If you have additional questions or comments, please contact your Service Voting Action Officer (contact information below) or the FVAP directly (contact information listed on pg. 2). ☐

Voting Action Officers

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Service Voting Action Officers

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